

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

April 23, 2003 LB 759

careful on that score. It means that border bleeding is riskier for Nebraska than most states, because unlike other states, our population is on the border of another state. What we found was a body of evidence that said sales went down in Nebraska almost identically as sales went up in Iowa at the point of which we did our most recent sales tax increase for cigarettes. So I'd take that into account. Secondly, I think it's true. I think price does deter youth smoking. So I count that as a plus for the idea. There is, however, an issue, an argument that I think is overblown and it's used by the public health groups in a variety of circumstances, which is if you could attack a health problem, you'd reduce costs. And there is some truth to that but, you know, people die of smoking, and if they don't die of smoking, they die of something else. Let us imagine that we were to eradicate smoking, it's true our longevity would pick up. People would live longer. I absolutely am convinced of it. But you know what, two years later they'd die of their diet. They'd die of too many McDonald's. They would die of their lack of fiber. They would die because they had too much sugar and had diabetes. And we would move to the next level of concern for which we would buy public well-being. In fact, it's true. There are costs to smoking and they are immense. I believe that. However, there are costs in a great deal of our circumstances and, in fact, diabetes, which is a source oftentimes of your sugar intake and as a matter of your own choices that way. Obesity, morbid obesity is on the rise in this state and in this country. It's a matter of personal choice as well. But we don't aim at those and they will be the next public problem in the event you were even to create a total ban of smoking. So the notion that you will be able to save for chosen health concerns, like smoking, will simply move the frontier of that concern even if you were able to stop smoking altogether because we're doing this all the time. Eventually, people will have the costs associated with death, and part of that process will be self-chosen behaviors. In the end, you can go, I think, too far in creating a personal obligation for self-choices because we're all doing it. This ties to the point, I think, that Senator Redfield and Senator Hartnett made. Our budget deficit problem is not the responsibility of 20 percent of our population. The responsibility for keeping the University of Nebraska strong doesn't fall to 20 percent of